

~~SECRET EYES ONLY~~

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

*Memorandum of Conversation*

Approved by White House,  
6/23/61

DATE: June 4, 1961  
3:15 P.M.  
Soviet Embassy  
Vienna

SUBJECT: Vienna Meeting Between The President  
And Chairman Khrushchev.

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
D - Mr. Ashalovsky  
(interpreting)

Chairman Khrushchev  
Mr. Sulzhodnev, Interpreter,  
USSR Ministry of Foreign  
Affairs

COPIES TO:

The White House-2  
The Secretary  
EUR - Mr. Kohler  
Executive Secretariat, Permanent Conference File

After lunch, the President said he wanted to have a few words with the Chairman in private.

The President opened the conversation by saying that he recognized the importance of Berlin and that he hoped that in the interests of the relations between our two countries, which he wanted to improve, Mr. Khrushchev would not present him with a situation so deeply involving our national interest. Of course, he recognized that the decision on Berlin, as far as the USSR was concerned, was with the Chairman. The President continued by saying that evolution is taking place in many areas of the world and no one can predict which course it would take. Therefore, it is most important that decisions be carefully considered. Obviously the Chairman will make his judgment in the light of what he understands to be the best interests of his country. However, the President said, he did want to stress the difference between a peace treaty and the rights of access to Berlin. He reiterated his hope that the relations between the two countries would develop in a way that would avoid direct contact or confrontation between them.

Mr. Khrushchev said he appreciated the frankness of the President's remarks but said that if the President insisted on the signing of a peace treaty and that if the

borders

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NLK - 86-138 APPEAL

By SKF NARA, Date 9/90

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borders of the GDR -- land, air, or sea borders -- were violated, they would be defended. The US position is not based on juridical grounds. The US wants to humiliate the USSR and this cannot be accepted. He said that he would not shirk his responsibility and would take any action that he is duty bound to take as Prime Minister. He would be glad if the US were to agree to an interim agreement on Germany and Berlin with a time limit so that the prestige and the interests of the two countries would not be involved or prejudiced. However, he said, he must warn the President that if he envisages any action that might bring about unhappy consequences, force would be met by force. The US should prepare itself for that and the Soviet Union will do the same.

The President inquired whether under an interim arrangement forces in Berlin would remain and access would be free. Mr. Khrushchev replied that would be so for six months. In reply to the President's query whether the forces would then have to be withdrawn, the Chairman replied in the affirmative.

The President then said that either Mr. Khrushchev did not believe that the US was serious or the situation in that area was so unsatisfactory to the Soviet Union that it had to take this drastic action. The President referred to his forthcoming meeting with Macmillan and said the latter would ask what had happened. The President said that he would have to say that he had gained the impression that the USSR was presenting him with the alternative of accepting the Soviet act on Berlin or having a face to face confrontation. He had come here to prevent a confrontation between our two countries and he regretted to leave Vienna with this impression.

Mr. Khrushchev replied that in order to save prestige we could agree that token contingents of troops, including Soviet troops, could be maintained in West Berlin. However, this would be not on the basis of some occupation rights, but on the basis of an agreement registered with the UN. Of course, access would be subject to GDR's control because this is its prerogative. Mr. Khrushchev continued by saying that he wanted peace and that if the US wanted war, that was its problem. It is not the USSR that threatens with war, it is the US.

The President stressed that it was the Chairman, not he, who wanted to force a change.

Mr. Khrushchev replied that a peace treaty would not involve any change in boundaries. In any event, the USSR will have no choice other than to accept the challenge; it must respond and it will respond. The calamities of a war will be shared equally. War will take place only if the US imposes it on the

USSR.

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USSR. It is up to the US to decide whether there will be war or peace. This, he said, can be told Macmillan, De Gaulle and Adenauer. The decision to sign a peace treaty is firm and irrevocable and the Soviet Union will sign it in December if the US refuses an interim agreement.

The President concluded the conversation by observing that it would be a cold winter.

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